

## Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 35782

MILITARY ADDRESSEES ALSO FOR POLADS

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MPOL, PGOV, PINT, PARM, FR

SUBJECT: FRENCH DEFENSE MANPOWER: A SMALLER ARMY?

REFS: A. PARIS 34006 DTG 161819Z NOV 76 NOTAL

B. PARIS 33654 DTG 121828Z NOV 76 NOTAL

1. SUMMARY: THE ANNUAL DEFENSE DEBATE IN PARIS HAS  
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RAISED INTER ALIA QUESTIONS AS TO WHETHER THE FRENCH

ARMY SHOULD BE REDUCED IN SIZE. INTERTWINED WITH THAT DISCUSSION IS THE REITERATION BY THE LEFT THAT THE TERM OF MILITARY SERVICE FOR CONSCRIPTS SHOULD BE SHORTENED TO LESS THAN THE CURRENT 12 MONTHS. ON THE OTHER SIDE A FEW GAULLISTS HAVE BEGUN TO ADVOCATE AN ALL VOLUNTEER ARMY. NONE OF THESE QUESTIONS WILL BE RESOLVED IN THE SHORT TERM, BUT BY 1980, OR PERHAPS SOONER, THE SIZE AND COMPOSITION OF THE FRENCH ARMY COULD BE SIGNIFICANTLY ALTERED. END SUMMARY

2. INTRODUCTION: REFERENCE A DESCRIBED THE PASSAGE OF THE FRENCH CY 1977 DEFENSE BUDGET AND OUTLINED THE THEME THAT THERE IS STRONG SUPPORT FOR A VIGOROUS DEFENSE EFFORT ACROSS THE FRENCH POLITICAL SPECTRUM. WE NOTED IN THAT MESSAGE THAT THERE ARE DEEP DIFFERENCES ON HOW BEST TO ACHIEVE OPTIMAL RESULTS. THIS DESPATCH ADDRESSES ONE OF THE MOST CONTENTIOUS ISSUES, THAT OF MILITARY MANPOWER, IN TERMS OF TWO QUESTIONS NOW UNDER DISCUSSION IN PARIS DEFENSE CIRCLES:

- HOW LARGE SHOULD THE ARMED FORCES BE?
- HOW LONG SHOULD THE TERM OF ACTIVE DUTY BE FOR CONSCRIPTS?

3. DISCUSSION: AT THE OUTSET IT SHOULD BE POINTED OUT THAT THERE IS LITTLE MEANINGFUL DEBATE OVER WHETHER CONSCRIPTION SHOULD BE CONTINUED. ALL POLITICAL PARTIES AGREE THAT CONSCRIPTION IS A LEGITIMATE METHOD FOR MEETING FRENCH MILITARY MANPOWER REQUIREMENTS. WHAT IS BEING QUESTIONED IS WHETHER THE CURRENT SYSTEM OF CONSCRIPTION IS EFFICIENT AND EQUITABLE. TRADITIONALLY THERE HAS BEEN GENERALIZED OPPOSITION TO AN "ARMEE DE METIER," THAT IS, A "PROFESSIONAL ARMY" MANNED ENTIRELY BY VOLUNTEERS. HOWEVER, RECENTLY AT LEAST A FEW GAULLISTS, SPEAKING INDIVIDUALLY RATHER THAN FOR THE PARTY, HAVE RAISED THE POSSIBILITY OF REVERSING THIS. OPPOSITION TO AN ALL PROFESSIONAL ARMED FORCE IS FOUNDED ON A NUMBER OF FACTORS, NOT ALL OF WHICH ARE SHARED ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM, BUT WHICH IN THEIR TOTALITY LEAD TO THE SAME CONCLUSION OPPOSING A PROFESSIONAL ARMY. THESE

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FACTORS INCLUDE:

- MILITARY SERVICE IS A PATRIOTIC AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL FRENCHMEN.
- "UNIVERSAL" CONSCRIPTION IS SOCIALLY JUST.
- A PROFESSIONAL ARMY WOULD BE MORE EXPENSIVE BY DEFINITION, IF ENOUGH QUALIFIED PEOPLE ARE TO BE INDUCED TO COMMIT THEMSELVES TO A CAREER IN

IT (ABANDONING OF CONSCRIPTION IN THE UK AND  
THE US ARE CITED AS EXAMPLES).  
-- ABANDONING CONSCRIPTION IN THE VIEWS OF AT  
LEAST SOME ECONOMISTS, WOULD FURTHER AGGRAVATE  
THE SERIOUS UNEMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS CURRENTLY  
EXTANT IN FRANCE.  
-- A PROFESSIONAL ARMY COULD SOMEDAY CONSTITUTE A  
THREAT TO THE DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS OF FRANCE  
I.E., THE FEAR OF MILITARY COUP D'ETAT.

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4. THERE ARE PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT SYSTEM OF CONSCRIPTION. DURING 1976 30 TO 35 PER CENT OF THOSE ELIGIBLE TO BE CALLED TO ACTIVE DUTY WILL HAVE BEEN EXEMPTED BECAUSE OF FAILURE TO MEET THE REQUIRED PHYSICAL OR EDUCATION STANDARDS, BECAUSE OF FAMILY HARDSHIPS, OR FOR A VARIETY OF OTHER REASONS. THUS, CONSCRIPTION IS CEASING TO BE UNIVERSAL AND THE ARGUMENT OVER WHO DOES HAVE TO SERVE BECOMES A QUESTION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE, ALWAYS A POLITICALLY LOADED ISSUE IN FRANCE. THESE PROBLEMS WILL

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BE AGGRAVATED IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS AS THE NUMBERS OF YOUNG MEN REACHING DRAFT AGE WILL INCREASE. IF THE SIZE OF THE FRENCH ARMED FORCES IS REDUCED, IT HAS BEEN PREDICTED THAT BY 1980 PERHAOS ONLY 50 PER CENT OF THE ELIGIBLE MEN WILL BE INDUCTED INTO THE ARMED FORCES. THUS IN RECENT WEEKS UDR FIGURES PIERRE MESSMER (PUBLICLY), ALEXANDRE SANQUINETTI AND RETIRED ADMIRAL LOUIS SANGUINETTI (PRIVATELY) HAVE CALLED FOR CONSIDERATION OF AN ALL-VOLUNTEER FORCE.

5. HOW LARGE SHOULD THE ARMED FORCES BE? IN THE CYL977 DEFENSE BUDGET PERSONNEL COSTS, OPERATIONS, MAINTENANCE, AND TRAINING WILL COMPRIZE ABOUT 59 PERCENT OF THE \$12 BILLION APPROVED BY THE ASSEMBLY ON NOVEMBER 9. ALL AGREE THAT LESS SHOULD BE SPENT ON PERSONNEL COSTS AND MORE ON R&D, INVESTMENT AND TRAINING. THE SEARCH FOR MORE INVESTMENT THEN LEADS TO CALLS FOR PERSONNEL REDUCTIONS.

6. THE CURRENT STRENGTH OF THE FRENCH ARMED FORCES IS ABOUT

-- 505,000 PERSONNEL EXCLUDING THE GENDARMERIE.  
-- THE DEBATE ON REDUCTIONS IS FOCUSED ON THE LARGEST COMPONENT --THE ARMY-- WHICH NOW HAS AN AUTHORIZED STRENGTH OF ABOUT 330,000 OFFICERS AND MEN.

A CONSENSUS APPEARS TO BE EMERGING THAT THE ARMY SHOULD BE REDUCED. THE QUESTION IS BY HOW MUCH.

-- THE DEFENSE MINISTRY HAS ALREADY ANNOUNCED A REDUCTION, AS PART OF THE REORGANIZATION PLAN, FROM 330,000 TO 309,000.  
-- PIERRE MESSMER (ARDENT GAULLIST), FORMER PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF DEFENSE, IN THE ASSEMBLY DEFENSE DEBATE TOLD DEFENSE MINISTER BOURGES THE ARMY SHOULD BE REDUCED BY NO LESS

THAN 50,000. AS NOTED ABOVE MESSMER HAS ALSO  
CALLED FOR CONSIDERATION OF AN ALL-VOLUNTEER  
ARMY.

-- JOEL LE THEULE (UDR DEPUTY, REPORTER FOR THE  
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DEFENSE AND FINANCE COMMITTEES OF THE ASSEMBLY)  
ASKED SCEPTICALLY IF IT IS POSSIBLE TO MAIN-  
TAIN A LARGE ARMY, EVEN WITH AN INCREASING  
MILITARY BUDGET.

- AT THE SOCIALIST PARTY (PS) DIRECTING COMMITTEE  
MEETING THE WEEKEND PRECEDING THE ASSEMBLY  
DEFENSE DEBATE (REF B), CHARLES HERNU (PRESI-  
DENT, PS DEFENSE COMMISSION) CALLED FOR AN UN-  
SPECIFIED REDUCTION IN ARMY SIZE AS DID HIS  
COLLEAGUES ROBERT PONTILLON (PS INTERNATIONAL  
AFFAIRS SECRETARY) AND JEAN-PIERRE CHEVENEMENT  
(HEAD OF CERES, THE PARTY'S LEFT  
WING).
- PS DEFENSE SPECIALIST JACQUES HUNTZINGER WENT  
A STEP FURTHER BY STATING PRIVATELY TO EMBOFFS  
(REF B) AND PUBLICLY (INTERVIEW IN NOUVEL  
OBSERVATEUR OF NOVEMBER 15) THAT THE ARMY  
SHOULD BE REDUCED BY ABOUT 100,000 MEN.  
CHEVENEMENT SUBSEQUENTLY CITED THE SAME FIGURE  
PRIVATELY TO EMBOFFS.
- THE COMMUNIST PARTY (PCF) HAS YET TO STATE A  
POSITION ON REDUCTIONS, BUT IT IS RELATIVELY  
UNLIKELY THAT THE COMMUNISTS WOULD OPPOSE A  
REDUCTION.

7. THERE ARE OTHERS WHO WOULD SUPPORT A SMALLER ARMY FOR  
NON-POLITICAL REASONS:

- THE AIR FORCE AND NAVY WHO WOULD SEE IT AS A  
VEHICLE TO GET A BIGGER SHARE OF THE DEFENSE  
BUDGET FOR THEIR SERVICE.
- THE ARMAMENTS INDUSTRY AND BUREAUCRACY WHICH  
CONSIDER NOW THAT TOO MUCH IS GOING FOR PER-

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SONNEL COSTS.

- THOSE WHO BELIEVE THAT IN THE AGE OF DETENTS,  
ARMIES SHOULD NATURALLY BE REDUCED IN SIZE.
- THE ARMY ITSELF RECOGNIZES THAT THERE COULD BE  
REWARDING TRADE-OFFS FOR MODEST REDUCTIONS.

8. IMPLICATIONS OF A SMALLER ARMY: IF ONE ACCEPTS THAT  
A CONSENSUS IS EMERGING WHICH, OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS,  
WILL LEAD TO A FRENCH ARMY REDUCED IN MANPOWER BY AS  
MUCH AS ONE-THIRD, WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS? THE FIRST  
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REACTION IS THAT THE FRENCH ARMY WILL BE WEAKER. THAT  
MAY NOT NECESSARILY BE THE CASE. IF THE ARMY DOES  
RECEIVE BETTER EQUIPMENT AND WEAPONS; IF THE PERSONNEL

CUTS ARE MADE IN MARGINAL ACTIVITIES AND UNITS (E.G., STAFFING OF MILITARY PREPARATORY SCHOOLS WHICH, DESOITE THE NAME, DO NOT FEED SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS OF GRADUATES INTO THE SERVICE); AND IF THE SMALLER, MORE MOBILE UNITS FORECAST IN THE ARMY REORGANIZATION PLAN ARE EFFECTIVE, A SMALLER FRENCH ARMY COULD PERHAPS ABPROACH IN MILITARY EFFICIENCY THE PRESENT ONE. AT THE SAME TIME IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW A CUT OF 100,000 COULD AVOID ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES.

9. LENGTH OF SERVICE TERMS FOR CONSCRIPTS: FRENCH DRAFT-EES TODAY SERVE 12 MONTHS. THE COMMON PROGRAM OF THE LEFT ADOBTED IN 1972 CALLED FOR A REDUCTION TO SIX MONTHS SERVICE. RECENTLY PS DEFENSE FIOURES HAVE FUZZED THIS BY SAYING PERHAPS EIGHT MONTHS, PERHAPS EVEN LESS THAN SIX. THIS ISSUE IS COMPLICATED BY THE CONSCRIPTION PROBLEMS OUTLINED IN PARA 4 ABOVE. THERE IS A CERTAIN FACILE APPEAL IN SHORTENING THE ACTIVE DUTY TERM FOR CONSCRIPTS BECAUSE BY SO DOING ONE INCREASES THE NUMBER OF OERSONS WHO WILL BE DRAFTED, THUS OARTIALLY AVOIDING THE SOCIAL INEQUITIES IF LARGE NUMBERS OF YOUNG MEN ARE NEITHER REQUIRED NOR CONSCRIPTED. THERE IS A SOLID CONVICTION WITHIN THE PRESENT FRENCH ARMED FORCES LEADERSHIP THAT SHORTENING THE SERVICE TERM CAN ONLY WEAKEN THE ARMED FORCES. IT IS DIFFICULT ENOUGH TO TRAIN A MAN IN 12 MONTHS; SIX MONTHS WILL TREMENDOUSLY COMPLICATE THE PROBLEM AND RAISE PERSONNEL TRAINING COSTS. THE LEFT SEEMS AWARE OF THIS PROBLEM.

10. COUNTERPOSED TO THE ARMY'S VIEW IS THE EMERGING OUT-LINE OF A SOCIALIST PARTY DEFENSE SCHEME FOUNDED ON THREE PARTS:

- THE NUCLEAR DETERRENT.
- A MOBILE INTERVENTION FORCE CAPABLE OF OPERATING BEYOND FRENCH FRONTIERS, MANNED BY "PROFESSIONALS/VOLUNTEERS."
- A "FORCE DE MOBILIZATION POPULAIRE" (FMP) COM-

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POSED OF CONSCRIPTS, WHO HAVING HAD A SHORT TERM OF ACTIVE SERVICE WITH "INTENSIVE" TRAINING, CONSTITUTE A READY RESERVE TO BE CALLED TO ACTIVE DUTY WHEN REQUIRED.

THIS PROGRAM HAS NOT, REOEAT NOT, BEEN OFFICIALLY ADOPT-ED BY THE PS, BUT IT IS CURRENTLY IN VOQUE WITH HERNU, CHEVENEMENT, AND OTHERS.

11. CONCLUSIONS: THE OFFICIAL MOD POSITION NOW IS THAT

THE ARMY WILL NOT BE DRASTICALLY REDUCED, BUT BOTH WITH-IN THE GOF AND THE OPPOSITION, THERE IS A BURGEONING CONSENSUS TOWARD A SMALLER FRENCH ARMY. SHOULD THE LEFT WIN THE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS IN 1978, IT WOULD PROBABLY WANT TO SHORTEN THE ACTIVE DUTY TERM FOR CONSCRIPTS BUT WILL BE FACED WITH THE SAME PRACTICAL OBSTACLES ACKNOWLEDGED IN FRENCH DEFENSE CIRCLES. THUS THERE IS AN ANOMALY CROSSING PARTY LINES IN FRENCH DEFENSE THINKING TODAY:

-- BROAD SUPPORT FOR AN INCREASING DEFENSE BUDGET BUT AT THE SAME TIME A CONVERGENCE OF E DISPARATE FACTIONS TOWARD AGREEMENT ON A SMALL-ER ARMY, WHICH, IF ANYTHING, WILL BE WEAKENED BY A SHORTER ACTIVE DUTY TERM FOR CONSCRIPTS.

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